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Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, RP
SUBJECT: MARCOS SETS REFERENDUM FOR OCTOBER 16

REF: MANILA 12402

SUMMARY: DURING TELEVISED CABINET MEETING AUGUST 31, PRESIDENT MARCOS APPROVED NATIONAL REFERENDUM FOR OCTOBER 16 IN WHICH THREE QUESTIONS WILL BE DECIDED. QUESTIONS CONCERN: (A) CONTINUATION OF MARTIAL LAW; (B) CONVENING OF INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (INA); AND (C) CALLING OF CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION (CONCON) TO AMEND CONSTITUTION AND REPLACE INA. IF PEOPLE APPROVE NEW CONCONC (WHICH SEEMS FOREGONE CONCLUSION), ELECTIONS FOR MEMBERS WOULD BE HELD BEFORE END OF FIRST QUARTER OF 1977 WITH REFERENDUM ON CONCON RECOMMENDATIONS POSSIBLY IN MAY AND ELECTION FOR NEW LEGISLATIVE BODY SOMETIME THEREAFTER. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING TELEVISED CABINET MEETING AUGUST 31, PRESIDENT MARCOS APPROVED REQUESTS FROM BARANGAYS, YOUTH BARANGAYS, AND SANGGUNIANG BAYANS TO HOLD REFERENDUM OCTOBER 16. PRESIDENT MARCOS, HOWEVER, WINNOWED SEVEN QUESTIONS PROPOSED BY THESE GROUPS TO THREE. THESE ARE:
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(A) DO YOU WANT MARTIAL LAW LIFTED?

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(B) ARE YOU AGAINST THE CONVENING OF THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY?

(C) IF YOU ARE AGAINST THE CONVENING OF THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, DO YOU WANT TO CALL A CONSTITUIONAL CONVENTION TO PROPOSE AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUION, INCLUDING THE ABOLITION AND REPLACE-MENT OF THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY?

2. IN DISCUSSING MECHANICS OF DISCUSSION PROCESS AND REFERENDUM, PRESIDENT DIRECTED COMELEC CHAIRMAN PEREZ (WHO SEEMED RELUCTANT TO UNDERTAKE RESPONSIBILITY) TO REGISTER VOTERS, DISTRIBUTE BALLOTS, ETC. PEREZ WILL SUBMIT RECOMMENDATION ON COMELEC PARTICIPATION WHICH WILL THEN BE FORMALIZED INTO A PRESIDENTIAL DECREE. RESPONDING TO QUESTION BY JUSTICE SECRETARY ABAD SANTOS WHETHER THERE WOULD BE FREE SPEECH DURING PRE-REFERENDUM PERIOD, PRESIDENT MARCOS (WHO SEEMED STARTLED AT SUGGESTION THERE WAS NO FREE SPEECH) AGREED THAT RULES WHICH OBTAINED PRIOR TO PREVIOUS REFERENDUM WOULD ALSO APPLY. INDIVIDUALS CAN SPEAK OUT AS LONG AS THEIR COMMENTS RELATED TO REFERENDUM ISSUES. MARCOS SAID HE WILL RE-ISSUE GENERAL ORDER 51A WHICH PROVIDES FOR FREE DISCUSSION AND DEBATE DURING REFERENDUM. DEFSEC ENRILE WANRED THAT FREEDOM COULD BE USED FOR PROPAGANDA BY ANTI-GOVERNMENT ELEMENTS.

3. AS IN 1975, REFERENDUM ANNOUNCEMENT CONSIDERABLY CONFUSED. AUGUST 28 AFTERNOON PAPERS REPORTED REFERENDUM WOULD BE HELD OCTOBER 16 AND LISTED SEVEN QUESTIONS. DEPARTMENT OF LOCA GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (DLGCD) UNSUCCESSSFULLY ATTEMPTED TO KILL STORY WHICH THEY HAD PROVIDED. "EXPRESS" AND "TIMES JOURNAL" RAN FERENDUM STORY AUGUST 29. "BULLETIN TODAY" DELAYED REPORTED UNTIL AUGUST 30, ALTHOUGH IT NOTED STORY HAD BEEN PREPARED PREVIOUSLY AND HAD NOT BEEN RUN BECAUSE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAD REQUESTED THAT IT BE HELD. PRESUMABLY, SEVEN QUESTIONS CONSIDERED EXCESSIVE, ESPECIALLY SINCE THEY OVERLAPPED.

4. COMMENT: THERE SEEMS LITTLE MYSTERY ABOUT ANSWER TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REFERENDUM QUESTIONS. PRESUMABLY, POPULACE WILL VOTE OVERWHELMINGLY TO (A) CONTINUE MARTIAL LAW; (B) NOT TO CONVENE INA; AND (C) TO CALL CONCON TO AMEND CONSTITUION AND REPLACE THE INA WITH ANOTHER LEGISLATIVE BODY. ONCE REFERENDUM HAS APPROVED CONCON, PRESIDENT CAN CALL FOR ELECTIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP. HE HAS SAID THESE WILL BE HELD SOMETIME IN EARLY 1977. (EMBASSY RECENTLY TOLD EXACT DATE WOULD BE JANUARY 17.)

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CONCONC WOULD RPVODE FOR ELIMINATION OF INA AND PERHAPS
CONVERY ITSELF INTO TEMPORARY REPLACEMENT AS REPORTED
PARA 7 REFTEL AND MANILA 10528. AS PRESIDENT INDINCATED
IN HIS AUUGUST 15 SPEECH TO SANGGUNIANG BAYAN ASSOCIATIONS,
THERE WOULD BE A SECOND PLEBISCITE IN MAY 1977 TO APPROVE
PROPOSED AMENDEMTNS TO CONSITUTION WITH ELECTIONS FOR
NEW LEGISLATIVE BODY SET FOR SOMETIME THEREAFTER.
EXACT TIMING WILL PROBABLY DEPEND ON DEGREE OF CONTROL
PRESIDENT FEELS HE CAN EXERCISE OVER PROCESS. VALENCIA
HAS SUGGESTED THESE ELECTIONS FOR 1979. OTHERS TALK OF
1980. LATEST PRONOUNCEMENT ON REFERENDUM AND NATIONAL
LIGISLATURE CAME DURING NATIONALLY TELEVISED CABINET
LUNCHEON PUNCTUATED BY CLATTER OF CUTLERY ON CHINA AND
STAGE WHISPERS TO MALACANANG WAITERS FOR MORE FOOD.
IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE PRESIDENT MARCOS SERIOUSLY BELIEVES
EITHER UPCOMING REFERENDUM OR CONCON WILL CONVINCE HIS
CRITICS T HOME OR ABROAD THAT HE IS INTENT ON RESTORING
MEANINGFUL LEGISLATIVE PROCESS. NE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THIRD ECHELON
COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP'S ALLIANCE WITH CHRISTIAN LEFT,
AND MNLF AIMED AT JUSTIFYING CONTINUED MARTIAL LAW
SUGGESTS MARCOS HAS NO INTENTIONS OF SURRENDERING ANY OF
HIS ABSOLUTE POWERS OR, INDEED, HAVING THEM DELIMITED
IN ANY SIGNIFICANT WAY.
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